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The Veterinary Profession In East Africa

F. K. Ramsey, D.V.M., Ph.D.

The veterinary profession in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika merits the plaudits and sincere appreciation of the livestock industry and the people of these countries. The veterinarians have done a superb job in the control and prevention of animal diseases in this country. Through their research, dissemination of intelligent veterinary information, and realistic, sensible veterinary practices, the livestock industry has made unbelievable progress in East Africa. Agriculture is one of the important keys in the continuing advancement and development of this country or any area of the world.

The livestock industry is vital to East Africa in that it accounts for one fifth of the country's productivity. A livestock industry in the tropics is utterly dependent on the veterinary profession. Today when many diseases have been curbed, thereby making tropical livestock farming possible, the daily task of keeping stock alive is apt to be underestimated. It is worthy of note, however, that the world's greatest cattle

killer, rinderpest, is only held at bay in the horn of Africa by the annual vaccination of 8½ million cattle. If vigilance were to be eased, the disease might well obliterate the industry in a single pandemic, as it did only sixty years ago. The present calamitous outbreak of African horse sickness in the Middle East is an example of what can happen when disease runs riot in the tropics.

East Africa's future needs must be viewed in the context of the normal veterinary cover of the better developed parts of the world. Thus, ignoring East Africa's thirty million sheep and goats, the existing veterinary cover in this essentially stock-breeding country is about one veterinarian to 100,000 head of cattle, compared with one to 3,300 in the United Kingdom, one to 6,000 in North America and one to 40,000 in South Africa. Again, there are some 6,500 veterinarians in Britain compared with about 200 in East Africa while the average annual output of the United Kingdom schools over the last ten years was 222, i.e. more than the total actually employed in East Africa, an agricultural country some 7½ times the size of Great Britain.

The veterinary profession of East Africa has a wide scope of responsibilities. In general it has direct or indirect supervision of all aspects of the animal industry. The veterinary profession is definitely involved in the trade of livestock and animal

* Dr. Ramsey is head of the Department of Veterinary Pathology at Iowa State University. The International Cooperation Administration (now Agency for Independent Development) requested the services of Dr. Ramsey to make a survey of requirements for the establishment of a college of Veterinary Medicine in East Africa and to advise and assist the East Africa High Commission, officials of Makerere College, The Directors of the Veterinary Services and other governmental and education officials in the development of a veterinary medical college program. Dr. Ramsey was in East Africa in June and July of 1960.



Cattle being washed before slaughter to remove dirt from the hide at the Athi River abattoir near Nairobi, Kenya.

products as the hide and skin improvement service, dairy industry improvement service and African livestock and poultry marketing organizations. It actively participates in formulating programs for animal husbandry and livestock improvement concerning type of pasture lands and soil fertilizers.

The veterinary services are responsible for prevention and control of animal diseases. These diseases include African swine fever, rinderpest, foot and mouth disease, lumpy skin disease, brucellosis, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, Rift Valley fever, clostridial infections, anthrax, black quarter and rabies. Diseases caused by agents transmitted by insects to susceptible hosts are East Coast fever, heartwater, blue tongue, trypanosomiasis, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and African horse sickness.

Routine diagnosis and analysis are important functions. Foot and mouth virus typing and detection are done. Serological tests are performed on sera and mucus for infectious infertility disease, Johne's disease and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia. The chemistry section of the veterinary services plays an important role in its dip testing service, milk testing service, toxicological analysis, and detection of deficiency diseases. In the field of parasitology specialized protozoological, entomological, and helminthological diagnoses

are made. Post mortem examinations, histopathological evaluations, microscopical examinations of smears, bacterial and toxic techniques and poultry diagnoses are routine functions of this department. Much work has been and is being done on isolation of viruses in tissue culture and in animals as well as serological tests for virus diseases.

Time and space will only permit mentioning the production of vaccines which is of prime importance to this country.

The primary purpose of the meat inspection services, essentially a public health function, is to prevent transmission of disease agents to the consumer and ensure a sound, safe and wholesome product for human consumption. The secondary aims are economic in nature and include the support of the meat industry and reduction of wastages and losses in meat and its by-products. An American Army delegation consisting of a veterinarian and a medical officer visited Kenya late in 1959 to study the standards of meat inspection and hygiene operated by departmental officers at the main exporting abattoirs of Athi River and Uplands, in order to advise their Government on the possible use by United States Forces of meat and meat products from Kenya. They commented in most favorable terms upon the methods and standards maintained in these abattoirs.



Holding pens at the Athi River abattoir. Meat Products were of excellent quality.

The central artificial insemination center is located near Kabete, Kenya. It was a splendid example of a very practical, modern, well equipped establishment that would compare favorably with similar plants in the United States. It is one of the finest artificial insemination centers south of the sub-Sahara and serves principally East Africa. The veterinary profession cooperates directly with this organization in health problems concerning the bulls and to see that the semen is a high quality product. Friesam, Guernsey, Ayrshire, Jersey, Hereford, Sahiwal and Red Poll bulls are used. Artificial insemination of cattle has resulted in quality improvement of small herds of cows on European and especially African farms.

The Wellcome Research Laboratory is located at Kabete, Kenya. The director is Mr. Jack Wilde who is actively engaged in research detecting the bone marrow and hematological changes occur in East Coast fever and in screening and evaluating the effects of various drugs on the etiological agent of East Coast fever and the host's tissue. Research is also being done on anaplasmosis.

The Wellcome Research Foundation contributed the funds for the physical plant of the Foot and Mouth Disease Research Center located at Kabete, Kenya. This is a substation of the veterinary services of Kabete, Kenya and is devoted en-



Artificial insemination of cattle has resulted in quality improvement of small herds of cows on European and especially African farms.



Ambulatory clinicians provide an excellent service to the African and European farmers.

tirely to research in foot and mouth disease.

The East African Veterinary Research organization (EAVRO) is one of the regional research organizations established by the East Africa High Commission, with financial assistance provided by the United Kingdom from the Research Allocation under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, to undertake research on important problems common to the whole East Africa region, which comprises Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar. It is recognized as one of the finest in the world.

This organization has co-operated with scientists and research institutions from various areas of the world. This has proven to be a most satisfactory arrangement and mutually beneficial to all parties. For a number of years the United States has had veterinary research teams, for example, working on rinderpest and African swine fever at the East African Veterinary Research Organization Laboratories. The potentialities for research in tropical diseases of domestic and wild animals stagger the imagination. Nature has provided one of the most ideal climates and beautiful environments known to man for the work.

The ambulatory clinicians of the Veterinary School of Kabete are providing an excellent service to the African and European farmers. It was very apparent that

these livestock owners appreciated the knowledge and skill of these veterinarians and were seeking advice from them concerning their animals.

In riding with African ambulatory clinicians I was most impressed with their enthusiasm about their work, their desire to improve the livestock industry, their ability in imparting knowledge to the farmer, their professional conduct on the farm and the scientific and practical approach in handling sick animals.

Marked progress in farming practices by the African was obvious. Improvement in the quality of their livestock was very apparent on many farms. Good poultry flocks varying in number from 200 to 1,000 birds were noted.

Self-government has occurred in Tanganyika. Self-government is imminent in the other territories. When it comes, it is believed that many of the British veterinarians will leave. If more than one-fifth of East Africa's productivity is to be preserved, let alone developed, an efficient veterinary service must be maintained. Therefore the loss of British Veterinary

personnel must be replaced in the very near future by locally trained African Veterinarians. This can eventually be accomplished by the establishment of a fully qualified veterinary school in East Africa open to all races.

A veterinary student must be trained in the environment in which he intends to work in the future. Tropical diseases, farming practices, animal husbandry, knowledge of local conditions, and veterinary problems that exist in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika and other parts of Africa must be emphasized in their veterinary training and education. This cannot be done if they receive their veterinary education in foreign countries.

In summary the writer wishes to state that definite progress has been made in the establishment of a fully accredited veterinary school at Kabete, Kenya for the training of African veterinarians. Phase I of the development of this school will be initiated in July of 1962. Financial assistance is coming from 3 main sources, Rockefeller Foundation, Agency for Independent Development (A.I.D.) and Great Britain.

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